

Welcome and closing remarks

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Welcome remarks

Good morning and welcome to EMN Norway's conference *Sustainable migration from poor to rich countries. Towards a new refugee and migration system*. I am pleased to see so many participants. Special welcome to speakers, panellists, EMN friends and others from UK or the continent. Special welcome also to our Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration who will introduce the conference with his perspectives on long term challenges for the migration and refugee field.

“Sustainable migration” is a new concept. If you tried to google that concept one year ago you would find 3-4 hits, today may be 500? But none of the hits, I think, will still refer to any definition, content, objective and utility of this concept. This, however, is a key objective of the conference, namely to try to elaborate a definition and a sustainable migration framework which can inform and guide our analysis and recommendations regarding migration from poor to rich countries. The focus “from poor to rich countries” is a required specification to make the topic relevant for immigration and integration authorities.

A new concept? Yes, but I must add that parts of what professors Collier and Betts have been working on reminds me of a White Paper (no. 17, 1994-95) which some of the Norwegian participants here today including myself was involved in back in the mid 90'. It was about Comprehensive Refugee policy focusing on solutions in the neighbourhood, temporary protection, the migration-development nexus and so forth. This brings me to believe that there is a solidity and generality in the two professors' way of thinking about refugee and migration issues.

This is an EMN conference Therefore I now leave the chair to EMN Norway coordinator Øyvind Jaer, senior advisor in the department of Immigration where I serve as Director General. Øyvind is the key man behind this conference and the work done in the department regarding sustainable migration. Øyvind will guide you through the conference. Øyvind, the floor is yours:

Closing remarks

Normally when closing meetings, I want to be concrete: What did we learn? What will we do now? However, we have in this conference dealt with complicated and overarching international priority questions and we are not in a position to decide on solutions or new processes. Thus, a couple of closing remarks:

We heard from the professors earlier today that Betts has devoted his working-life to saving refugees and Collier to saving the Bottom Billion. We need people like you. We need you and our other researchers in the field to work to further enlighten us bureaucrats, politicians and the public to understand the complexity of this field and to base politics and regulations on knowledge.

EMN has an important role to deliver comparative information as well as “food for thoughts” like today’s conference. And I know Collier and Betts on their part are working on what I am sure is going to be an exciting book for us all – namely about Sustainable Migration.

I guess you have noticed that our minister has promoted this conference and found the concept of “sustainable migration” fruitful and inspiring although other researchers have been reminding us that there are challenges in trying to practice the theory.

I am not going to act as a politician, but I think it is good reason to believe that our responsible minister is open to the idea of Magnus Olivius – the speaker from the EU Commision - of bringing the perspectives of today’s conference with him in his discussion with European colleagues.

Finally, a vote of thanks to all speakers and panelists as well as participants. And to the organizers:

A conference like this is demanding for organizers and workers on the ground. A big thanks goes to EMN Norway for the idea and initiative, planning and implementation. Øyvind was the chair, so you are well aware of him. Stina Holth – where are you – is the EMN coordinator in UDI and an important member of the conference team. And likewise Magne Holter – where are you - from the department of Immigration, the third of this triumvirate. Let us give them a deserved applause.

And then, have a nice evening and a warm and refreshing summer.”

16:00 End of conference